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PP RUEHWEB

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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 262023Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2603
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6579
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 3897
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7787
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5032
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2264
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 2368
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3335
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4435
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4909
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 1600
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 9499
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0072
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RHMFIUU/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0169
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS LA PAZ 000515

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR WHA/AND
SAN JOSE FOR USAID/OFDA TIMOTHY CALLAGHAN
STATE PASS AID FOR DCHA/OFDA, MILENA POPP; LAC/SA, JEFF
BAKKEN;
DCHA/FFP, BARRY BURNETT
LIMA FOR DHS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EAID](#) [AMED](#) [ASUP](#) [CASC](#) [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA FLOODING SITREP 1: FEBRUARY 26, 2007

Summary

¶1. (SBU) The worst flooding in Bolivia in 25 years has affected around 350,000 people, mainly in Bolivia's eastern departments of the Beni and Santa Cruz, causing over USD 100 million of damage to the agricultural sector and outbreaks of dengue fever and malaria. The governor of the Beni told the Charge that 17,000 families, cattle, and crops in the Beni were affected by flooding. He complained that the central government was not coordinating with the regional government to provide aid effectively. He said that evacuees are in need of tents, children's clothing, medicine, and bedding as the floods spread to new areas. End summary.

Floods Ravage the East

¶2. (U) Over 65 percent of the Bolivian territory is suffering the effects of a particularly strong El Nino phenomenon, including flooding, drought, and hail, according to press reports. Following are damage estimates:

- Heavy flooding has affected an estimated 350,000 people, mainly in Bolivia's eastern departments of the Beni and Santa Cruz, leaving 35 dead and 6 missing, according to press reports. Post has no reports of Amcits affected to date.
- Press reports indicate that this is the worst flooding that has occurred in the past 25 years.

- Forty percent of the territory of the Beni is underwater.
- The government is now preparing contingency plans for the complete evacuation of the city of Trinidad, capital of the Beni with a population of 90,000 people. (Note: Only 28 Amcits are registered in Trinidad and 40 in the Beni. End note.)
- The president of the Eastern Agriculture Chamber estimated that the floods had caused over USD 100 million of damage to the country's agricultural sector alone. Almost 500,000 acres of crops have been destroyed in Santa Cruz.
- The flooding has already produced almost 500 cases of dengue fever and 1,500 cases of malaria.

The Beni Suffers USD 115 Million in Losses

13. (SBU) Prefect Ernesto Suarez, governor of Bolivia's eastern Beni department, met with the Charge on February 26 and mentioned the following problems in the Beni:

- 17,000 families have been affected by flooding in the Beni. Up to 500,000 head of cattle could die before the crisis is over.
- The economic damage to the department could amount to more than USD 115 million in losses of housing, clothes, cattle, crops, and roads.
- International aid from Peru, Venezuela, Spain, and Argentina, including helicopters, has arrived late due to the central government's slowness to act. The central government is not coordinating with the regional government to distribute aid effectively. The central government refuses to acknowledge the extent of damage in the Beni. Suarez requested our assistance in obtaining satellite images to show the GOB to encourage it to declare the Beni a natural disaster zone.

Aid Efforts Underway, but Insufficient

14. (SBU) Suarez explained that the regional government had turned 24 schools into temporary shelters and set up 12 camps in rural areas. Because of the need for shelters, school had been suspended in the capital, Trinidad. He said that over 13,000 people were being given food and medicine by municipal governments and the prefecture. However, the water is spreading to new areas, and the aid that has been received thus far is insufficient, he said. He said they need tents, children's clothing, medicine, and bedding. The Charge explained that the Embassy had already given approximately USD 500,000 in aid, would be sending 200 tents to the Beni today, and would announce another donation shortly. (Note: Post is also seeking permission from the Office of Personnel Management to raise funds within the mission. End note.)

Comment

15. (SBU) Prefect Suarez added that the flood waters are spreading to other areas of the Beni and that they are unlikely to recede from low-lying regions for two months. Given that flood waters are continuing to rise, the full extent of this disaster remains to be seen. Nonetheless, this disaster will have dramatic consequences and a major impact on Bolivia's agricultural sector. Post is analyzing additional support from the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and the United States Southern Command, as well as seeking to publicize donations to improve the USG image. End comment.

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